



MAKING CONNECTIONS

Idaho city finds ways to educate its Hispanic community about storm water

By Cheryl Jenkins & Kay Lynn Brown

When the city of Nampa, Idaho, received its NPDES municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) permit in October 2009, storm water pollution was a new concept for most residents. City staff faced the task of educating the community about how its behavior could affect nearby Indian Creek and other local water bodies. The city, located 20 miles west of Boise, is a regional hub for manufacturing, food processing and agriculture. Many unique challenges played an integral role in the development of a public outreach plan.

Neighborhoods around Indian Creek have some of the largest Hispanic populations in Nampa. The city lacked the connections and Spanish language ability needed to effectively reach the growing Hispanic community. Over the next four years, the city found ways to overcome

language and cultural barriers to educate people about storm water pollution. The city's public involvement approach has earned a state communications award and acknowledgment from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

In navigating the first four years of the MS4 permit, the city learned three important lessons in public education: Know your community, involve community insiders and form partnerships with community organizations.

Know Your Community

More than 21% of Nampa's residents are of Hispanic origin. The Hispanic community in Nampa includes recent immigrants whose primary language is not English, as well as individuals who have resided in the community for generations. The Nampa community also is younger

than most cities, with a median age of 29.8, compared with 37.2 for the entire U.S. Both facts helped shape the city's public education and outreach program.

During the summer of 2011, the city received a grant from the EPA Urban Waters Initiative to complete initial research about the Hispanic population and how best to reach community members with storm water information. The city engaged Rosemary Curtin of Rosemary Brennan Curtin Inc. (RBCI), a local public involvement firm, to assist with the process. Curtin helped the city develop a plan for reaching and educating the Hispanic community. RBCI also engaged the services of a Hispanic community health educator, Jocabed Veloz, who developed a demographic profile of the Hispanic community in Nampa.

Several recommendations came out of the research process, such as providing materials in both English and Spanish, connecting the storm water message to behaviors in the community (e.g., car maintenance and lawn care), and presenting the storm water message at venues frequented by target populations.

Bilingual materials reached more than just community members with limited English proficiency. Other English-speaking Hispanic community members connected with the materials as recognition of their culture and heritage. New materials developed include bilingual tip sheets and a children's booklet featuring the Nampa storm water mascot, Ollie the Owl. Each publication explains small behavior changes that can reduce storm water pollution. These materials and a traveling storm water display board system were used at various community events with a large Hispanic presence.

In 2014, the city installed a permanent shelter with storm water interpretive signage at a local park. This project was the city's first permanent outdoor educational structure, and it helped enhance the park while providing visitors with information about the surrounding environment and habitat.

Involve Community Insiders

Word-of-mouth communication from prominent members of the Hispanic community was the most effective method for

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Through the storm water partnership between the city and the Nampa School District, students have learned how to help reduce pollutants entering local waterways.

encouraging Hispanic involvement in the city's storm water program.


During the planning process, the city assembled a committee of Hispanic community groups and leaders. This committee suggested specific ways to engage its community, including distributing information at popular Hispanic events and radio stations. The group's recommendations resulted in successful meetings between city staff and the Mexican consulate, the Mayor's Hispanic Business Professionals Committee, Hispanic health and political associations, the Hispanic Professional Women's Assn., and local Hispanic media outlets. Each group assisted the city with distributing storm water tip sheets and event invitations to its members.


Other municipalities can enlist the help of community leaders through methods such as:

- Determining the most popular events within the target community and bringing information to those events;

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- Forming an advisory group of community insiders who can give feedback about activities and materials; and
- Scheduling events at locations familiar to the target community.

Form Community Partnerships

In addition to reaching out to the Hispanic community, the city formed a multi-year partnership with the Nampa School District. This partnership has helped the city provide education and involvement opportunities for its youngest residents.

Through the storm water partnership, students have learned how to help reduce pollutants from entering local waterways. They then are able to pass their knowledge on to parents, family, friends and neighbors. Many local students and their families have participated in the city's storm water education events.

In the years leading up to the partnership, city and school district leaders developed a memorandum of understanding and scope of work defining goals and

specific activities. A team of teachers then was identified to spearhead the program. During the 2012-2013 school year, the team developed and implemented curriculum for various grade levels, encouraged students to participate in the annual Stormwater Community Cleanup Day and organized a student-led Water Education Day for the Nampa community.

This partnership has met the city's NPDES storm water permit requirements for public education and outreach at minimal cost to the city. In turn, the school district receives additional resources and educational opportunities for students and families.

The city estimates the partnership has saved \$10,000 in public outreach and involvement costs during the 2013 fiscal year. Funding for supplies such as wet suits, groundwater models and water quality test kits provide students with unique hands-on experience. The city also covers stipends for the team of teachers that develops curriculum and organizes

outreach activities. The total annual budget for the joint project is \$25,000.

Outcomes for Nampa

The city quickly learned that city governments alone do not have the connections or clout to achieve large-scale behavior change. With community partners and leaders on board, however, it is possible to reach clean water goals. The city's three main lessons are applicable to other communities as well.

Forming connections with prominent Hispanic leaders and partnering with the Nampa School District not only increased the city's outreach, but also improved its message by meeting the specific needs of the local population. **SWS**

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